DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 100 388 IR 001 490

AUTHOR	Martin, Allie Beth
TITLE	Role of the Public Library in the National Program. Related Paper No. 2.
INSTITUTION	National Commission on Libraries and Information Science, Washington, D.C. National Program for Library and Information Services.
REPORT NO	NCLIS-NPLIS-2
PUB DATE	Oct 74
NOTE	31p.
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.75 HC-$1.85 PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS	*Financial Support; Futures (of Society); Information Needs; Interinstitutional Cooperation; *Library Cooperation; Library Education; *Library Networks; *Library Services; Library Standards; National Programs; Program Evaluation; *Public Libraries
IDENTIFIERS	National Commission Libraries Information Science; *National Program for Library and Information Ser

ABSTRACT

In the future, changes in the composition of communities will require public libraries to shift the emphasis of their service to adults. Growth in technology and the knowledge industry will also require adjustments. Urban, suburban, and rural libraries face differing needs to improve service. The National Program for Library and Information Services could help overcome some of the barriers to effective public library service. It could aid in financing through increased state and federal funding and in personnel management, selection, and training through programs for library education. It could encourage utilization of technology and accelerate interlibrary and interinstitutional cooperation through a coordinated network of networks. The libraries of the nation have much to gain from a coordinated federal library program. (Author/PF)

ED100388

NATIONAL COMMISSION ON LIBRARIES AND INFORMATION SCIENCE

NATIONAL PROGRAM FOR LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES

RELATED PAPER
NUMBER TWO

ROLE OF THE PUBLIC LIBRARY IN THE NATIONAL PROGRAM

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Describes the relationship and involvement of the public library with the national program as described in the second draft of the NCLIS program document. Projects the role and prospective benefits the public library would have in relating its program to such a national program, projects the types of standards the public library should be required to meet to join the national program, anticipates problems in developing this relationship, and suggests solutions.

OCTOBER, 1974

The views expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the NCLIS. Though related to the Commission's National Program, papers in this series are not an integral part of the National Program Document.

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Role of the Public Library in the National Program

by Allie Beth Martin

This paper relates the public library to the proposed National Program of NCLIS. It reflects the thinking of representatives of various segments of the public library community and incorporates the recommendations of various recent studies of the public library. A panel of six public librarians was also invited to read and react to the National Program. Their reactions are incorporated throughout the paper. The National Commission is to be commended for its earnest solicitation of reaction and response from many facets of the library community.

The paper uses as its point of departure the public library and its users - now and in the future. These are related to the major principles contained in the National Program.

The plans for implementing the principles established in the Program have also been examined from the point of view of how they would work in relation to the needs of local libraries and their users. Certain gaps and apparent inconsistencies have been noted.

The Program sets a positive tone by stressing the importance of libraries and information centers as a valuable national resource and of access to these resources which should be guaranteed by the federal government as the right of every citizen.

Further, it has been suggested that libraries and information centers are major utilities and their protection and support is in the public interest.

1. Public Libraries and the Communities They Serve - Now and in the Future

A. Societal Influences

Public libraries responding to the needs of their users are conscious of a variety of societal forces which are and will be paramount:

1. Changing population - All signs point to an older population which will be better educated, more affluent, have more leisure and place more value on the quality of life. It will be made up of people who are mobile, changing homes, jobs, avocations with frequency.

   Within the larger population a disadvantaged minority with different, critical problems will continue to need special services if it is to be brought into the mainstream.

2. The knowledge industry - The number one growth industry will be the knowledge industry in which the private sector may be expected to move rapidly ahead of the public sector in providing information services.

3. Technology - Individual citizens will have new avenues of access to information and education as well as cultural resources. These include the flourishing paperback industry, the increasing use of microforms and of non-print media, the growth of video-technology and increased access to machine readable data banks.

4. Education - Educational patterns will be modified with stress on open schools and universities, individualized approaches and the growth of non-traditional study opportunities.

B. Influences of These Forces on Public Libraries

The population changes noted above are already affecting public libraries. The ratio of adult users is increasing and new services are being geared to them. The shifts of emphasis to adult education are examples. Recent use studies indicate growth in the number of adult patrons availing themselves of these offerings and a decline in students using the library as a support for formal education though the latter is still a major public library function.

While the number of children using public libraries is declining their unique services remain important. The proposed combined school-public library seems to be catching on very slowly with most promise in small towns and rural areas. Until public schools become year-round community centers, it appears unlikely that the public library will be able to abandon its services to children and youth.

Public libraries will be challenged to meet the needs of people whose lives are marked by constant mobility, by changing careers and changing interests and who require services for even longer lives. Energy shortages, transportation problems, more homebound and institutionalized patrons make branch libraries bookmobiles, mail services and delivery to insitutions more important. Affluence and more leisure time enhance the role of the public library as the community cultural center providing places for programmed events and exhibitions.

The format of public library resources will be influenced more and more by the burgeoning knowledge industry and by technology. Not only will the packages become more varied, but it will no

longer be necessary for the containers (the books, periodicals, films, etc.) to be in individual libraries. Instead the library will need to add to its responsibility as collector and repository and become a primary access point, a communicator, a locator, an educational facilitator. The role of the public library in every community serving individual users on a person to person basis will be more vital than ever before.

"There is an essential interplay, a kind of action-reaction between the seeker of fact, information and knowledge, and the 'keeper' of the record, which reinforces the need for easy access. Notwithstanding future development and use of the most sophisticated computerized storage systems involving regional, state and national library service networks, the requirement of proximity and action-reaction characteristic of library services likely will remain of paramount importance so that the local base of library institution also will remain" [1]

The efficacy with which this one to one service is provided for individual users at the point that the primary contact is made will in fact determine whether or not the national network of library and information services is effectively brought into play. Indeed the final worth of the inter-library loan systems, the data banks, the wireless and wired networks will be determined by the success

[1] Government Systems and Studies. The Role of the State in the Development of Public Library Services by Rodney P. Lane. USOE, 1974. p. 17.

of the librarian who meets the individual citizen across a library desk or answers his telephone call. The librarian who provides the humanistic link in the initial communication and encourages a two-way exchange is essential. "We produce and stockpile information and knowledge in every conceivable field and yet we neglect to arrange for ready access."[2]

These personal services in libraries at the citizen's primary access point vary in many respects from one library to another. One set of differences which must be taken into account in any national plan for library and information services is that resulting from size of community. Categorization by urban, suburban and rural communities is an over-simplification, but it illustrates the folly of developing a national plan with a generic "public library" as a major component. "The needs of the coal miner in Appalachia are not the same as those of the Minnesota farmer or the Wall Street clerk."

Problems of large public libraries in urban centers are manifold, but two which challenge the future of these institutions are:

(1) the problems inherent in the cities themselves (race, poverty, decay). We are told they are so grave we cannot expect solutions in this century.

(2) the presence in these cities of strong public library

[2] Conant, Ralph. Contemporary Society. Unpublished paper, 1974

collections which constitute a major information resource for the nation. Indeed, they may have more potential value for their surrounding regions than for the immediate city in which they are located. Because of the first problem, decline of major cities, these libraries have already begun a deterioration which cannot hope to be reversed by the cities in which they are located.

Suburban libraries face an entirely different set of problems. Here the challenge is to keep up with demand of exploding populations. Here the potential for developing public libraries as community centers already exists. The wherewithal in money and manpower has seldom kept up with the growth of suburban users and with their needs to have access to resources impossible to duplicate in every suburb.

Small town and rural communities face still different library challenges. While the total population is rapidly becoming urbanized the number of libraries in this category is eight times the number of urban and suburban libraries. Users of these libraries probably need most to access library resources outside their immediate communites. In many instances their librarian is least equipped to assist them in the critical transaction when the patron first makes his needs known. Here it is totally impractical to provide more than basic library resources and these may be available only from a mobile or mail service. At this point, the greatest imagination in helping patrons avail themselves of outside resources is called for.

11. Potential for Public Library Success in Fulfilling Citizen Needs - How the National Program will help insure success.

The question is sometimes asked: "Will there be a need for public libraries in the future?" This can probably best be answered with the statement that if there were no public libraries there would be a need to invent something else to replace them. There is a demonstrated need, and what we know of the future indicates it will continue. This institution, the public library, must do the following:

(1) Provide free informational service for all on a one to one basis without regard to user's purpose or qualification.

(2) Provide or locate the widest possible range and form of resources for information, for decision making and for cultural enrichment.

(3) Provide or locate resources and services to facilitate learning on an individual basis.

(4) Serve as a repository of the recorded past, especially of the local community and region.[3]

Libraries at Large lists five "emerging library responsibilities" of libraries today. These are directed to libraries of all types but they are consistent with the functions suggested previously for the public libraries. They are more selective, and focus on priorities:

1. To support formal education, from pre-kindergarten through graduate and professional schools.
2. To sustain the increasingly complex operations of

[3] Summary of needs identified in the PLA Goals Study, Strategy for Public Library Change. ALA, 1972. p. 20

the government and the economy of the country.

3. To provide opportunities for continuing self-education and retraining.

4. To play a role in the reintegration into the society of groups now largely isolated and excluded by their lacks in education and training.

5. To provide resources for an informed public opinion and person, cultural and intellectual growth and individuation.[4]

The Government Studies and Systems Study of the Role of the State in Developing Public Library Services adds yet another important responsibility - specialized research services.[5]

Another public library role becoming increasingly important as more reliance is placed on informational, educational and cultural resources outside the library itself is that of the public library as co-ordinator and catalyst for all such resources within each community. This means not only inter-library cooper tion, but cooperation with special information and referral centers and governmental services; identifying the resources of civic, service and cultural organizations, academic institutions, informal groups, even individuals with specialized knowledge.

The full array of resources easily at hand in the immediate community or surrounding area should be exploited before the state inter-library loan network is tapped, the regional or even the national

[4] Knight, Douglas. Libraries at Large. Bowker, 1969. p. 18

[5] Government Systems and Studies. The Role of the State in the Development of Public Library Services by Rodney P. Lane. USOE, 1974. p. 9.

network is called upon.

How possible is it for these needs to be fulfilled by public libraries? Some public libraries already perform a number of these roles, most do some of them. The inoperable words in the PLA goals summary are: "all" and "widest possible" and these may forever remain long range goals. A beginning can be made by concentrating on presently unserved target groups.

Most certainly these responsibilities will not be successfully fulfilled in any but the most affluent areas if the library is dependent solely on local funds. Outside funding will be essential.

The basic assumption of the National Program (p. 2) support some, though not all, of the goals identified in the PLA Goals Study, and by other investigators relating libraries to their users. These assumptions are based on the premise that the major responsibility of libraries is dealing with resources which can be organized and made accessible through technical networks. Public libraries are essentially humanistic institutions performing personal services. Organizing and locating resources is but one segment of their responsibility.

III. Barriers to Successful Public Library Performance - Will the National Program Help Overcome Them?

Barriers identified in the PLA Goals Study and in other recent surveys and analyses including testimony at the Hearings of the National Commission fall in these broad areas:

1. Finance
2. Personnel management, selection and training
3. Lack of visibility, failure to reach all segments of the population
4. Failure to establish objectives, to modify and update programs and to measure their effectiveness
5. Failure to utilize technology
6. Lack of inter-library and inter-institutional cooperation.

These are the major problem areas which public libraries must overcome to fulfill user needs in the future. No National Program can solve all of these problems, nor should it. It should help solve those which cannot be solved locally or in-state.

1. Finance - A more aggressive stand for substantial increases must be taken by all parties involved and at all levels if libraries are to receive the support their importance justifies. This means librarians and boards in local communities. It also means the National Commission.

   The National Program Objectives state that federal categorical aid is still needed. Further information is needed in order to assess how fully the program responds to library financial needs. The historic inadequacies in library funding and their relatively minor precent support should be acknowledged. Projected financing must be realistic to do the job of adequately supporting and developing this valued "national resource."

Numerous solutions based on a balanced financing pattern shared by the local state and federal government have been recommended by various studies and by library leaders. It appears this shared commitment will be required for the forseeable future. A gradual shift to a 30% local - 50% state - 20% federal formulas has been suggested in the Government Studies and Systems Study. Is this a recommendations which the National Commission supports? The statement on p. 53 of the National Program suggests that NCLIS anticipates a gradual phase out of federal categorical aid and ultimate reversion of the major financial responsibility to the local level.

If public library financial problems are to be substantially ameliorated certain principles must be built into the distribution of federal funds:

a. Local and state financial efforts should be recognized in the formulas
b. Equalization for disadvantaged areas should be included in formulas
c. Inter-library cooperation should be encouraged
d. Innovation and experimentation should be supported
e. Major resource libraries serving statewide and multi-state areas should be adequately reimbursed
f. Multi-state cooperation should be financially encouraged.

Throughout the Program the assumption seems to be made that if funding and services reach the state level, the local level will automatically be involved. This may not always be true unless the Program builds in the local responsibility to share in planning and decision making. Another inherent problem in developing in-state networks which involve all types of libraries, is the separate

administrative and funding structure of schools and institutions of higher learning in many states.

2. Personnel Management, Selection and Training

Personnel selection and management are local and state problems but education, including both preparation and continuing education, are problems which must be dealt with at all levels.

Completion of the Continuing Library and Information Science Education Project under the auspices of NCLIS is a significant advance providing a wealth of background data and offering alternative plans for implementation. How will the National Commission carry forward its support of library continuing education to help insure fullest implementation of the study recommendations?

Objective Four of the Program deals with the importance of adequately trained personnel including basic and continuing education. Stress is placed on adequate understanding of technology and of state and national networking as an alternative to "performance in traditional ways." More important as an alternate to performance in traditional ways than simply adequate understanding of technology and networking is educating for a full range of services and skills necessary for the functioning of modern public libraries. These include new management patterns, planning, performance evaluation, the wide array of new services suggested in the list of public library functions, inter-disciplinary learning required to deal effectively with urban problems, with governmental agencies, with the total community, to list a few areas of library educational needs.

Next to funding, problems relating to library personnel including continuing education, topped all others in the Public

Library Goals Study. These were concerned with personnel effectiveness in serving users not institutions.

3. Lack of Visibility, Failure to Reach All Segments of the Community

The National Program does not mention the need for a major information effort addressed to the public at large alerting it to the importance of the library and information services available to them. This is the obligation of local, state and federal library agencies on an on-going basis. This includes the National Commission whose own responsibilities are not too well understood by the library community much less by the public at large. (Parenthetically, the NCLIS Regional Hearings and appearances of Commission and staff at library meetings have been exemplary means of informing the library community about NCLIS. These will need follow-up if they are to remain effective.)

The National Program does stress the importance of special constituencies. More money is necessary but this is not the only requirement for reaching these presently unserved groups. New ways of communicating with them, conveying understandably what libraries have to offer must be developed. Also, it should be kept in mind that there are many special constituencies to be reached in addition to the economically disadvantaged, e.g. the informationally disadvantaged, business and industry, planning agencies, other professional workers, the blue collar community.

4. Failure to Establish Objectives, to Modify and Update Programs and to Measure Their Effectiveness

This refers to a local library problem but it relates to the National Program.

The goals and objectives of libraries at the various levels must be understood each by the other. Also, these goals and objectives must originate with user needs at the local level not be superimposed from above and they must be continually changed and updated. This calls for a continuing dialogue with input up and down: local ↔ state ↔ federal. Also, the effectiveness of services performed must be continually measured as a basis for on-going planning. Contemporary techniques of planning and performance evaluation such as those being developed by DeProspo and Associates at Rutgers should be widely disseminated. The National Program can encourage these management practices by example and by building them into the Program.

5. Failure to Utilize Technology

The literature search accompanying the Public Library Goals Study indicated that public libraries were making even less use of technological advances than were other types of libraries.

Some of this reluctance can be attributed to:

a. The cost of automation (systems analysis, programming and maintenance) and of hardware necessary to implement most applications of technology

b. Difficulty of understanding and communicating with technical experts

c. Poor initial experience due to the state-of-the-art and overselling by suppliers.

Public libraries have been slow to accept even relatively unsophisticated audio-visual equipment. The reluctance of public librarians to accept technology has a philosophic basis. Personal service is an article of faith with public librarians. They are by and large humanistic in outlook.

The Second Draft of the National Program provoked a negative response on this point from all of the panel of public librarians who provided reactions for this paper of amplification. Each felt strongly that the Program still places too much emphasis on technology and gives too little attention to the human factors in library service. The new draft does incorporate many of the basic principles regarding service lacking in the first. The same detail and amplification needs to be given these principles as is given technology.

6. Lack of Inter-library and Inter-institutional Cooperation

A great deal of attention has been given to the importance of cooperation among libraries for many years. Federal funds provided through LSCA served as a major impetus to public library systems in the sixties. In recent years this progress has slowed and though large areas of the country remain without library service or have service of a minimal quality, relatively few new systems have developed. This may have resulted from the realization that gathering poor libraries together to form a system accomplishes little more than establishment of poor systems. Systems are effective if they are adequately funded and if they provide for flexibility and diversity among the member units enabling them to respond to the needs of users at the community level.

More recently many very promising inter-type library cooperatives have come into being as a result of modest funds available for inter-library cooperation through LSCA.

The National Program envisions a coordinated network of networks which offers great promise for improved access to the nation's library

resources by users of local libraries. In order for this network to be truly functional, local library cooperatives and multi-jurisdictional systems within the states must be operating efficiently. Modest investments to date at federal and state levels have created some excellent intra-state cooperatives.* Additional funds which further stimulate local and in-state cooperation will be important as a part of the legislation implementing the National Program. Ideally, all of these systems and cooperatives would meet certain standards of compatibility.

It will, however, be important for the national network to accommodate some diversity not impose an arbitrary straight jacket on all existing cooperatives and networks. Some efficiency may have to be sacrificed in the interest of fullest possible participation. Not all duplication is necessarily wasteful.

Resistance to enforced uniformity even within local public library systems is common today. Libraries are not unique in this experience. Demand for local autonomy is increasing within school systems and in other governmental services. Open-mindedness and flexibility are hallmarks of successful negotiations leading to cooperation.

Public libraries can serve as a positive force for cooperation if they are stimulated to serve in the leadership role at the local level, coordinating all types of library and other information services as described previously. No other library, indeed no other community service or agency, is as well suited to perform this role. "The

* By definition the National Program defines inter-library cooperation as "informal" in contrast to networks defined as "formal." Numerous inter-library cooperatives <u>are</u> formal. Also, networks are often informal.

public library has a considerable way to go before it can be called a strategic access point, but it is the most promising conduit that exists."[6]

The present state of the economy may prove to be an effective force spurring local inter-library cooperation. As prices of books and periodicals escalate and budgets become tighter, cooperation may be a necessity.

6 Government Systems and Studies. The Role of the State in the Development of Public Library Services by Rodney P. Lane. USOE, 1974. p. 35

IV. Relationship of Local Public Libraries and Systems to Other Government Levels - How Do These Affect the National Program?

A. Planning districts

The proliferation of planning districts and councils (EDA's and COG's) suggests a possible new level of coordination and cooperation which has been exploited by libraries in a few areas. These multi-jurisdictional districts have brought disparate groups together for other functions: health, solid waste disposal, law enforcement. They focus on providing the benefits of cooperative planning while retaining the maximum local autonomy. They may also constitute an important new library constituency.

B. States

Until recently the states had not appeared to be promising as a major source of income for public library service. Indeed prior to the availability of LSCA funds state library functions had been among the most poorly supported of any level. At present, states are experiencing surplus revenues heretofore unknown. Studies of public library finance now suggest that local public libraries should seek as much as 50% of their support from the states, with the remaining 50% divided between the local and the federal government. One state, Washington, is working toward elimination of all local support on the basis of its inequities.

Local public libraries and systems also benefit directly from services provided at the state level or from in-state service district created at the state level. These services include inter-library loans, film services, continuing education and in-service training, technical processes and public relations. They are provided with little loss of local autonomy and without expenditure of local

funds.

A number of states have developed certification plans and standards for public library service, but most of these have been relatively token efforts unless tied to funding through state aid or LSCA.

Problems have resulted in some states from failure to involve local libraries in planning decisions and from failure to adequately reimburse large resource libraries, both public and academic, for area-wide services. The National Program presumes that inclusion of the states insures local involvement; an assumption that warrants further investigation.

C. Federal

Local public libraries and public library systems often feel limited ties to the federal government. Even those receiving LSCA funds are often unaware of their source since guidelines for expenditures are established at the state level. They are, of course, fully aware of the importance of the federal support when alerted that LSCA appropriations are in danger. Few public libraries have availed themselves of other federal funds, e.g. NDH, HUD, PEP, the Older Americans Act. Federal revenue sharing has been a singular disappointment. Since it now appears revenue sharing will continue, even increase, public libraries must continue to press for a share of these funds though they are poorly suited to libraries whose service areas include more than one jurisdiction.

Most public libraries are not really aware of the potential benefits of coordinating federal services under a national agency and many might even resist such an ideal since even at a distance a larger hence more powerful, bureaucratic force might appear dangerous. The track record of the Library of Congress, commonly thought to be the

national library, has not been too good in some respects, so that its credibility as a future national agency may be questioned. Only the large public libraries have direct ties with the large specialized federal libraries and information agencies.

These are assumptions which have not been documented, but they should be borne in mind in developing the new federal legislative program since its passage will depend a great deal on local libraries, their constituents and their Congressmen.

Forceful leadership is needed at the national level, the libraries of the nation have much to gain from a coordinated federal library program. The National Program is a positive move. For it to become a reality, a great amount of encouragement, persuasion and explanation will be necessary. Continuing opportunities for two way exchange will be essential, not only with librarians, but with the library associations. The working relationship between the NCLIS and ALA needs to be clarified.

V. Major Federal Responsibilities Recommended in the National Program

1. Standards

A clear distinction needs to be made in the National Program between various types of standards, e.g. bibliographic standards, performance standards, technical standards. For the most part public libraries have had limited experience with the enforcement of standards of any sort. In contrast to academic and school libraries, public libraries have had little opportunity to realize the benefits of adherence to standards.

Contrary to the statement in the National Program, standards established by various types of libraries are not generally adopted or widely understood. "A standard cannot be offically accepted, however, unless it represents a criterion by which current judgements of value can be confirmed. It is because general agreement on judgements of value attainable by a reasonable number of institutions cannot be secured that no unit of ALA has yet been able to produce standards that meet an acceptable definition."[7] Standards for Public Library Systems are out of date, backward looking and lack credibility. They are based on the "best guess" of the people who developed them including the author of this paper. A new public library standards committee has been appointed and at this point the nature of its end product has not been determined. The working papers preceding the present PLA Standards Committee and a special commissioned

[7] PLA Newsletter, Vol. 13, No. 2, June 1974. p. 5

paper by Ralph Blassingame[8] reflect the feelings of many, that instead of standards, goals and guidelines - norms and benchmarks - which may be used in developing plans for individual libraries, are most practical at this time. They are less likely to serve as a straight jacket and to inhibit innovation. If indeed national performance standards are desirable for public libraries, extensive research which will provide a sound, credible basis will be required first. Present standards have little credibility with legislative people, citizen groups or with library boards.

2. Making Unique National Collections Available Nationwide

This would be welcomed by public libraries particularly the larger ones. The restrictions on lending by large academic and special libraries, even though understandable, have been particularly galling to public libraries whose strong commitment is to free access to information for whomever needs it. To have access to these collections with federal reimbursement would be a boon even to the small branch library which might not call on the Newberry once in twenty-five years, but whose patrons are truly isolated and benefit doubly on the rare occasion when such materials are needed and may be borrowed or copied.

3. Centralized Services for Networking

For the same reasons the centralized networking services would be extremely valuable to public libraries. Given the premise that

[8] Blassingame, Ralph and Mary Joe Lynch. Design for Diversity: Alternatives to Standards for Public Libraries. PLA Newsletter, v. 13, No. 2, June, 1974.

this is the "court of last resort" a national effort to develop local area state and regional cooperatives and networks should precede or develop simultaneously with these centralized services to insure as much compatibility as practical.

4. Explore Computer Use

The hesitance of public librarians to use computers has already been discussed. Research which may develop computers especially designed to perform library tasks, hopefully at less expense than most libraries have encountered to date, is important. To be candid, the proposed National Computer Network "federally legislated" will sound like 1984 to many public librarians! One respondent said, "This make the hackles stand up on my neck."

5. Applying New Forms of Telecommunications

This aspect of the proposed national network will certainly be most welcome and readily accepted. Teletype, audio, digital and video signals plus mail, parcel service and Greyhound are familiar and libraries have had good experience with many of them, though the U.S. Mail may be joining the computer in the ranks lacking credibility. Use of FTS would be a tremendous breakthrough. FCC and NASA controlled channels would be most welcome if subsidized by the state or federal government.

6. Support Research and Development

Again the value of such activity cannot be overestimated but with the following caveats:

a. Results should be widely and inexpensively disseminated. Results of too many federally funded research projects have never been distributed to the library community,

even the NCLIS studies. ERIC is invaluable but it does not reach the public libraries who most need the information.

b. Use of the information should not stop at the state level. It would be useful at the local level also.

c. Results of research should be demonstrated in prototype situations which again should be widely reported. When research results demonstrate the practicality of wide-spread application, the intial stages of implementation should receive some federal or state support.

7. To Foster Cooperation With Similar National/International Programs

This effort would certainly be widely supported.

8. Supporting Responsibilities - Responsibilities of State Governments

The importance of state level support for public library development has already been discussed, also the support services frequently provided.

The responsibility of state governments as set forth herein seems to indicate that the national network stops at the state level. In this case further communication up or down from the library user through his local library may or may not take place. The statement: "Some states may decide to provide funding for the further development of library and information services within the state, while other states may elect to share funding with local governments." is more apt than the writer may have realized. This is what does happen. The state makes the decision, often without communcations with or advice from the individual libraries or the users. Also, the state has jurisdiction over all types of libraries in relatively

few states. Hence the largest collections in the state, the large universities and colleges and sometimes the large public libraries are outside the domain of the agency making vital decisions for them and serving as their link with the national network.

Responsibilities of the Private Sector

The assessment of the resources in the private sector and inclusion of these resources in the national network would be invaluable to the public library community. At present the data bases of even the not-for-profit organizations in the private sector are beyond the means of all but the largest and wealthiest public libraries. Increasingly the information in these bases is not available in any other source. This already means that only the rich can afford much information which would be useful, indeed is needed, by the ordinary library user, the common citizen. Data only in machine readable form has cut off the availability of much information which traditionally has been free for everyone through libraries. It threatens one of the most basic elements of democratic society, freedom of information. Federal support which will make it possible for this information to be available through library networks may be the only answer. How will the quality of these data bases be evaluated for consumers? Not all are equally valuable.

Responsibilities of the Library of Congress

Adequate funding which would make it possible for the Library of Congress to function as described in the National Program, would be a great benefit to libraries and their users nationwide. The changing role of the Library of Congress needs careful examination. In time its principal responsibility may be to other service agencies rather than to individual libraries. The poor track record of the

Library of Congress mentioned earlier has been the result largely of inadequate funding, crowded facilities, and the need for more progressive management. If these problems can be resolved, the potential of this great national resource can be fully realized.

9. Proposed Legislation

The following questions arise:

--Whose responsibility? NCLIS alone?

--What is the role of the American Library Association?

Response to funding criteria suggested for consideration:

1. Only programs consistent with National Program aims and objectives.

The principle is understandable and might be workable if aims and objectives were arrived at with input from the library community. What assurance is there that in the future, these aims and objectives would not be colored by the political persuasions of the Administration?

2. Subscribe to national bibliographic and technical standards

Seems reasonable. "Other standards?" Public library reservations have already been stated.

3. Program begun with federal funds will be sustained by the recipient for several years

Impractical. Most public libraries can only encumber funds a year at a time. Few have any control of their funds "several years" in advance.

4. Federal funds would not be used to dilute local effort.

A good principle. However, what would happen is as at present, the maximum legal sources of income are being used and because of declining property values actual local income is declining.

5. Match federal funds according to a formula on factors other than population and per capita

Good. Indeed, it is necessary to take into consideration effort and special constituencies, e.g. deprived.

6. Develop mutually compatible formula between state and local

Excellent, this is why local libraries should be integral to the National Program not outside it.

7. Adhere to protocols and conventions of use for national network

Not advisable, if similar to the ALA Inter-Library Loan Code which essentially disenfrancises a large segment of public library users, e.g. 1) non-serios users, 2) undergraduates, 3) children. Also sets arbitrary restrictions on type of materials loans, e.g. fiction, recent titles. With the availability of photo-copying, even out-of-print materials should be available through inter-library loan without such limitations.

If the development of local cooperatives, in-state and regional inter-library loan systems is realized, the burden on the top level network will not be so great. All levels should be open to all users of the network if it is to be supported by public funds.

Most of the above funding criteria seem more appropratie for guidelines to be administered by the responsible agency, not to be enacted into law.

The last paragraph of the Program could serve very effectively as the introduction to the entire document. The first sentence of this

paragraph: "America must not forget her dream of individual freedom and of an open approach to learning and knowledge," summarizes the basic tenent of public library service. Public libraries will be well served if much of what is in the Program becomes reality.

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